

ABSTRACT**INFORMATION STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL**

5

An information retrieval apparatus for searching a set of information items. The apparatus comprises a mapping processor, a graphical user interface, a user control and a search processor. The mapping processor is operable to generate data representative of a map of information items from a set of information items. The map provides the information items with respect to positions in an array in accordance with a mutual similarity of the information items, similar information items mapping to similar positions in the array. The graphical user interface displays a representation of at least some of the information items, and the user control is provided for selecting an information item. The search processor is operable to perform a related search with respect to the user selected information item by identifying information items which correspond to neighbouring position in the array with respect to the array position corresponding to the user selected information item. Since the search processor is arranged to identify information items in the search from the array rather than by searching the information items for some characterising information feature, such as a keyword, searching for information items of interest can be effected with a reduced complexity.

25

Figure 20.